# TOWARDS BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE HOLY QUR'AN

Holy Qur`an Resource Paper 1

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Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim

# TOWARDS BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE HOLY QUR`AN

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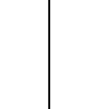
All praise is for Allah Who sent down the Qur'an to His servant and messenger Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) so that he may be a warner to the worlds. Blessings be on Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) who was sent as a witness, and a bearer of good news and a warner, and as one inviting to Allah by His permission, and as a light-giving torch through Quran. Blessings be on his progeny (Ahlulbayt), from whom Allah kept away the uncleanliness and whom He purified a thorough purifying, and whom Allah made the true interpreters of the Glorious Quran after the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny).

## Holy Qur`an is a complete code of life

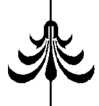
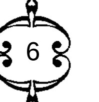
The Quran-e-Majid is the Word of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) as revealed to His Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) for man's guidance. The Qur'an comprehends the complete code from the Almighty Creator, for the human beings to live a good, chaste, abundant and rewarding life in obedience to the commandments of Allah, in this life and to gain salvation in the next. It is indeed the "chart of life" for every man, and it is the "constitution" of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.

Quran is for mankind, a "compass" in the turbulent voyage of life, as it has explained itself in the following verses:

قَدْ جَآءَكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ نُوْرٌ وَّ كِتٰبٌ مُّبِيْنٌ۔ يَّهْدِىْ بِهِ اللّٰهُ مَنِ
اتَّبَعَ رِضْوَانَهٗ سُبُلَ السَّلٰمِ وَ يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى






النُّوْرِ بِاِذْنِهٖ وَ يَهْدِيْهِمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ ۔

*". . . Indeed, there has come to you light and a clear book from Allah; With it Allah guides him who will follow His pleasure into the ways of safety and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His will and guides them to the right path."*

(Surah Al Ma`idah 5:15-16).

Historically, it is Qur'an which transformed the simple shepherds and wandering Bedouins of Arabia into the founders of empires, the builders of cities, the collectors of libraries. If a system of religious teachings is evaluated by the changes which it introduces into the way of life, the customs and beliefs of its follower, then Qur'an as a code of life is second to none. It is not strange then, that more studies on Quranic topics, translations and more commentaries of the Holy Qur'an have been published, than that of any other book claimed to be the Divine Revelation.

## What is Quran?

However, before dealing with any other topics in the Quranic studies, e.g. its authenticity as the word of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He), it is of paramount importance to have a glimpse towards better understanding of the book itself: The Glorious Quran. What is Quran? What is this book about? What are its contents? How is it a miracle? Why millions of believers still take this 14 centuries old book as their source of guide and salvation in their lives? How is it different from any other thousands of books penned by different authors? What is so unique about Quran? Is the Quran a book of history, or of poetry? Or is it a book about science and natural phenomena? Is it a book about Social

manners and spirituality or a book about Allah's Creation? Is it a book of Law? What is its general theme?

In an attempt to answer these questions, the following narratives are presented, which need careful reflection for better understanding of the Qur`an:

## Qur`an Describes Itself

Let us start by reflecting upon what Qur`an has to say about itself.

The Qur'an introduces itself as the guidance for the people "HUDAN LINNASI" (2:185); and the manifest light "NUURAN MUBIINA" (4:174).

According to Qur`an, Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) has laid down solution of every human problem in the Qur`an very clearly. Qur`an says:

وَ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ تِبْيَانًا لِّكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَّ هُدًى وَّ رَحْمَةً وَّ بُشْرٰى لِلْمُسْلِمِيْنَ۔

*"and We have revealed the Book to you explaining clearly everything; and it is a guidance, mercy and glad-tidings for Muslims".*

(16:89)

Also He has described the Qur'an in these words:

...... هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَ بَيِّنٰتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدٰى وَ الْفُرْقَانِ۔

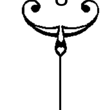
*"....... a guidance for mankind and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination (between wrong)".*

(2:185).

The Qur'an is, accordingly, a guidance, an evidence, a discrimination between right and wrong and a manifest light for the people to guide them aright and help them in all their









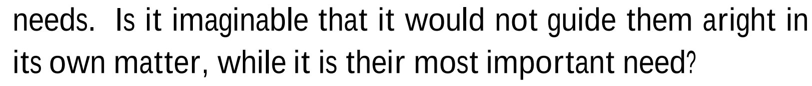






needs. Is it imaginable that it would not guide them aright in its own matter, while it is their most important need?

Again Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) says:



وَ الَّذِيْنَ جَاهَدُوْا فِيْنَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا۔ وَ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِيْنَ۔

*"And (as for) those who strive hard for Us, We will most certainly guide them onto Our ways".*

(29:69)

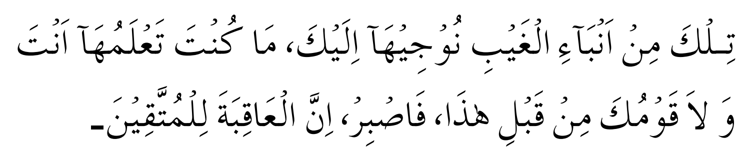
Which striving is greater than the endeavor to understand His Book? And which way is more straight than the Qur'an?

اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَ يُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا۔

*"Lo! this Qur'an guides to that which is most upright. And it gives glad-tiding to the believers who do good actions that they have great rewards".*

(17:9)

The Holy Qur'an is a book which by sound reasoning bestows insight upon man. It shows the right path to man by giving the accounts of the Prophets and the nations. It motivates him through parables, exhortations and admonitions.



تِلْكَ مِنْ اَنْبَآءِ الْغَيْبِ نُوْحِيْهَآ اِلَيْكَ، مَا كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُهَآ اَنْتَ وَ لاَ قَوْمُكَ مِنْ قَبْلِ هٰذَا، فَاصْبِرْ، اِنَّ الْعَاقِبَةَ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ۔

*"Such are some of the stories of the unseen, which We have revealed unto you, before this neither you nor your people knew them. So persevere patiently,*

*for the end is for those who are righteous".*

(11:49)

The Qur'an describes its other function as the presentation of the Prophetic mission, which is aimed at guidance of humanity, by delivering it from darkness and leading it towards light:

الٓرٰ ۔ كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ لنَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ بِاِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ اِلٰى صِرَاطِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَمِيْدِ۔

*"A Book We have sent down to you so that you may bring forth mankind from the darkness into the light, with the permission of their Lord, towards the path of the Glorious the Praiseworthy."*

(14:1)

What is the meaning of darkness mentioned in the above ayah? Without doubt the darkness of ignorance is one of the vices from which the Qur'an emancipates humanity and leads it towards the light of knowledge and wisdom. However, if merely ignorance were regarded as darkness, then the philosophers could have accomplished this job. But there exist other evils more dangerous than the vice of ignorance, and to subdue them is beyond the power of sheer knowledge. Among them are the vices of worship of material benefits, egoism, enslavement to desires, and greed, which are considered to be personal and moral vices. Social vices like oppression and discrimination manifest the spiritual darkness of a society. In Arabic, the word zulm (injustice and oppression) is derived from the same root as zulmah (darkness), which shows that injustice is a form of social and spiritual darkness. To struggle against such forms of darkness is the responsibility and mission of the Qur'an and other







heavenly books. Addressing Prophet Musa (`as), the Qur'an says:

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا مُوْسٰى بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اَنْ اَخْرِجْ قَوْمَكَ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ وَ ذَكِّرْهُمْ بِاَيّٰىمِ اللّٰهِ، اِنَّ فِىْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُوْرٍ۔

*"And We sent Musa with Our signs (and told him) that you may bring forth your people from the darkness into the light and remind them on the days of Allah; indeed in it there are signs for all those who are patient and grateful."*

(14:5)

This darkness, this shadow, is the darkness of Fir'aun's oppression and injustice and that of his clique. The light is the light of justice and freedom.

The exegetists of the Qur'an emphasize the point that whenever the Qur'an mentions darkness, it always uses it in the plural form although it always uses light in its singular form. This means that the word 'darkness' includes all sorts of darkness, all of the evil ways that lead towards darkness, and that 'light' signifies one single right path --the path of righteousness, whereas the ways of deviation and perversion are many. In Suurat al-Baqarah, the Qur'an says:

اَللّٰهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا يُخْرِجُهُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ، وَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْآ اَوْلِيٰٓئُهُمُ الطَّاغُوْتُ يُخْرِجُوْنَهُمْ مِّنَ النُّوْرِ اِلَى الظُّلُمٰتِ، اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ، هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ۔

*"Allah is the Protector of the believers; He brings them forth from the darkness into the light. And the*







*unbelievers--their protectors are taghut, who bring them forth from the light into the darkness, these are the people of hell-fire, unto it they will dwell forever."*

(2:257)

Thus the Qur'an determines its goal to be the breaking of the chains of ignorance, misguidance, moral and social corruption and destruction, or in other words, to dissipate all sorts of 'darkness' and to guide humanity in the direction of 'justice, goodness and light'.

هٰذَا بَيَانٌ لِّلنَّاسِ وَ هُدًى وَّمَوْعِظَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ۔

*"This is a declaration for humankind, a guidance and admonition to those who ward off (evil)".*

(3:138)

In other places, the Qur'an describes itself as under:

ذٰلِكَ الْكِتٰبُ لاَ رَيْبَ، فِيْهِ، هُدًى لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ۔

*"This is the book; in it is guidance for sure without doubt, to those who fear Allah".*

(2:2)

يُدْعَوْنَ اِلٰى كِتٰبِ اللّٰهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ يَتَوَلّٰى فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ وَ هُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ۔

*"They are invited to the book of Allah to settle their dispute, but then a party among them goes back while they are turning away".*

(3:23)

اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَآ اَرٰكَ اللّٰهُ، وَلاَ تَكُنْ لِّلْخَآئِنِيْنَ خَصِيْمًا۔

*"We have sent down to you (O Muhammad) in truth*











*so that you might judge between men as guided by Allah, and do not be an advocate for those who betray".*

(4:105).

وَهٰذَا كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ مُبٰرَكٌ فَاتَّبِعُوْهُ وَاتَّقُوْا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُوْنَ۔

*"And this is a book which We have revealed as a blessing, so follow it and be righteous, that you may receive mercy".*

(6:155).

كِتٰبٌ اُنْزِلَ اِلَيْكَ فَلاَ يَكُنْ فِيْ صَدْرِكَ حَرَجٌ مِّنْهُ لِتُنْذِرَ بِهٖ وَذِكْرٰى لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ۔

*"A book revealed unto you, so that your heart be not in any difficulty on that account, (so that) with it you may warn (the sinful) and teach the believers".*

(7:2).

وَمَا كَانَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنُ اَنْ يُّفْتَرٰى مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلٰكِنْ تَصْدِيْقَ الَّذِيْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ وَ تَفْصِيْلَ الْكِتٰبِ لاَ رَيْبَ فِيْهِ مِنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ۔

*"This Qur'an is not such as can be produced by other than Allah, on the contrary it is a confirmation of (revelations) that were sent before it, and a full explanation of the book, wherein there is not doubt from the Lord of the worlds".*

(10:37)

وَمَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ اِلاَّ لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِى اخْتَلَفُوْا فِيْهِ وَ هُدًى وَّ رَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ۔

*"And We sent down the book to you for the express purpose that you should make clear to them those things in which they differ, and so that it should be a guide and mercy to those who believe".*

(16:64).

لَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكُمْ كِتٰبًا فِيْهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ۔ اَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُوْنَ۔

*"We have revealed for you (O men) a book in which there is a message for you, will you then not understand".*

(21:10).

تِلْكَ اٰيٰتُ الْكِتٰبِ الْمُبِيْنِ۔

*"These are the verses of the book that make things clear".*

(26:2).





كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اِلَيْكَ مُبٰرَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوْٓا اٰيٰتِهٖ وَ لِيَتَذَكَّرَ اُوْلُوا الْاَلْبَابِ۔

*"... A book which We have sent down unto you with full of blessings so that they may meditate on its signs and that man of understanding may receive admonition".*

(38:29).

اِنَّآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتٰبَ لِلنَّاسِ بِالْحَقِّ، فَمَنِ اهْتَدٰى فَلِنَفْسِهٖ، وَ مَنْ ضَلَّ فَاِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا، وَ مَآ اَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيْلٍ۔

*"Verily We have revealed the book to you in truth for instructing mankind. He that receives guidance benefits his own soul, but he that strays injures his own soul, and surely you are not set upon them to arrange their affairs".*

(39:41).

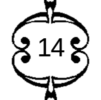


## The Excellence of Qur'an according to Ma'soomeen(a.s.)

No pen is capable of describing the excellence and magnificence of the Glorious Qur'an. This statement is absolutely correct, because while describing the Holy Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) himself said:

*"The superiority of the Speech of Allah over other speeches is like the superiority of Allah over His creatures."*

Ayatullah Al-Marja' Marhum Sayyid Al-Khui (r.a.) said:





"What can a person say in describing the eminence of the Qur'an and its glory? What can he say to explain its excellence and sublimity? How can a contingent being perceive the greatness of the speech of the Absolute Being? What can an author write about this subject and what can a speaker say? Can a limited being describe anything that is unlimited?

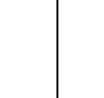
"It is sufficient greatness for the Qur'an, and sufficient eminence and glory, that it is the speech of the Almighty Allah, and the miracle of His noble Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny), and that its verses are the guarantee for the guidance of human beings in all their concerns and circumstances and at all times. This is their guarantee to reach the final goal and the great happiness now and later on.



"Indeed, it is better to hand over the elucidation of the excellence of the Qur'an to those comparable to the Qur'an.

They are Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and AHLULBAYT. They are the persons most knowledgeable about its status, and the best able to point out its lofty prestige, and they are its peers in excellence and its associates in guidance".

Absolutely true! Let us leave the M'asoomeen (peace be upon them) to explain to us the excellence of the Qur'an as they are the teachers of the Qur'an. Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) taught the Qur'an to His Prophet and appointed him as the teacher of the Book:



نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوْحُ الْاَمِيْنُ۔ عَلٰى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُوْنَ مِنَ الْمُنْذِرِيْنَ۔ بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيٍّ مُّبِيْنٍ۔

*"The Faithful Spirit has descended with it upon your heart that you may be of the warners, in plain Arabic language."*

(26:193-4)

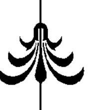




وَ اَنْزَلْنَآ اِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ۔

*"And We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them, and that haply they may reflect"*

(16:44)



......رَسُوْلاً ...... يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ۔

*"... an Apostle ... who recites to them His communications and purifies them, and teaches*



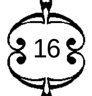
*them the Book and the Wisdom."*

(62:2)

Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) describes Qur`an..... Therefore, let us ponder and reflect upon what the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny), the teacher of the Qur'an, said about the excellence of the Holy Qur'an. He said about it in a sermon thus:



- "... Therefore, when mischief come to confuse you like the segments of darkened night, then hold fast to the Qur'an;
- as it is the intercessor whose intercession shall be granted;
- and it is a credible advocate;
- and whoever keeps it before him, it will lead him to the Garden;





- and whoever keeps it behind, it will drive him to the Fire;
- and it is the guide that guides to the best path;
- and it is a book in which there is explanation, particularization and recapitulation;
- and it is a decisive (word), and not a joke;
- and there is in it a manifest (meaning) and an esoteric (one);
- thus its apparent (meaning) is firm, and its esoteric (one) is knowledge;
- its exterior is elegant and its interior deep;
- it has (many) boundaries, and its boundaries have (many) boundaries;

- its wonders shall not cease, and its (unexpected) marvels shall not be old.
- There are in it the lamps of guidance and the beacon of wisdom, and guide to knowledge for him who knows the attributes.
- Therefore, one should extend his sight; and should let his eyes reach the attribute; so that one who is in perdition may get deliverance, and one who is entangled may get free;
- because meditation is the life of the heart of the one who sees, as the one having a light (easily) walks in darkness; therefore, you must seek good deliverance and (that) with little waiting".




After his death, the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) appointed his progeny Ahlulbayt to carry on this work after him - to explain the true meaning of Qur'an to the people. It is clear from his unanimously accepted tradition:

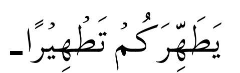
*"I am leaving behind among you two precious things; as long as you hold fast to them you will never go astray after me: The Book of Allah and my progeny, my family members; and these two shall never separate from each other until they reach me (on) the fountain".*




And Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) has confirmed, in the following two verses, this declaration of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) that his progeny had the real knowledge of the Book:



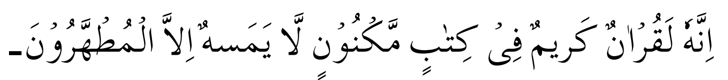
اِنَّمَا يُرِيْدُ اللّٰهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ اَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَ




*"Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanliness from you, O people of the House! and to purify you a (thorough) purifying."*

(33:33)






*"Most surely it is an honoured Qur'an, in a Book that is hidden; None do touch it save the purified ones."*

(56:77 -79) .

Now let us see what Ahlulbayt have said about the excellence of Qur'an:

Allama Majlisi in volume 19 of his multivolume work Bihar al-Anwar has reported that:

Al-Harith al-Hamadani related the following:



*"I entered the mosque and some persons were in deep controversy about some hadith traditions. I went to 'Ali bin Abi Talib and said: 'Are you aware that people at the mosque are in dispute over hadith?' He said, 'So they have done it!' I said, 'Yes.'*

He (peace be upon him) said, 'I have indeed heard from the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) saying, "There shall be sedition (fitna) after me."' I asked: 'How do we avoid that?'



He (the Prophet, (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny)) said: 'The Book of Allah, the Book of Allah.

- In it is the information about those who were before you and what will come after you, and it will be the judge among you.

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلٌ فَصْلٌ۔ وَّمَا هُوَ بِالْهَزْلِ۔

- *It is the final decision and not a jest.*

(86:13-14)

- It is that which not even the might could forsake without being shattered by Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He).
- Whoever seeks guidance in anything other than it, Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) will lead him astray.
- It is the firm rope of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He).

الذِّكْرِ الْحَكِيمِ۔

- *It is the wise remembrance.*

(3:58).

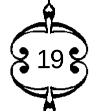
- It is the straight path.
- With it, hearts will never deviate, nor will the tongues utter confusion.
- Scholars will never have their full of it; it will not wear out from constant use, nor will its wonders be exhausted.
- It is that which when the jinns heard it, they could not help saying:

إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْآنًا عَجَبًا۔

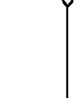
*"We heard a marvelous Qur'an (recitation)."*

(72:1)

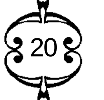
- Whoever utters it speaks the truth, whoever rules by it is just; whoever abides by it will receive his just reward; and whoever calls for it shall be guided to the straight path. Follow it."

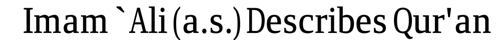








## Imam `Ali (a.s.) Describes Qur'an

In another place, the Commander of the Faithful Imam `Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) describes the Qur'an as follows:

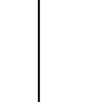
"Then Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) revealed to him (the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny)) the Book.

- It is a light whose radiance shall not be extinguished;
- A lamp whose flame shall not die;
- An ocean whose depth shall not be fathomed;
- A path which shall not lead astray;
- A blaze whose brilliance shall not be darkened;
- A criterion whose evidence shall not be suppressed;
- An elucidation whose cornerstones shall not be demolished;
- A cure with which there is no fear of ailments;
- A power whose supporters cannot be defeated;
- A truth whose helpers will not be forsaken.
- Thus, it is the source of faith and its prosperity;
- It is the fountain-head of knowledge and its vastness;
- The meadow of justice and its flowing streams;
- The support of Islam and its foundation;
- The valleys of the truth and its fields;
- An ocean that shall not be drained by those who draw upon it;
- A spring that shall not be exhausted by those who draw from it;

- A watering place that shall not be depleted by those who come to it;
- A station whose road the travelers do not miss;
- A signpost which the wayfarers will always see;
- The hilltops that cannot be bypassed by those who seek them.
- Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) has made it the quencher of the thirst of scholars,
- A vernal season for the hearts of the jurists,
- A destination for the path of the righteous,
- A cure after which there is no malady,
- A light which does not alternate with darkness,
- A rope whose knots are firm,
- A stronghold whose peak is impregnable.
- It is power for whoever cultivates it,
- Peace for whoever dwells on it,
- A guidance for whoever follows it,
- A laudable act for whoever embraces it,
- An argument for whoever speaks for it,
- A witness for whoever fights for it,
- A sharp instrument for whoever bases his arguments on it,
- A support for whoever supports it,
- A means of deliverance for whoever employs it,
- A sign for the discriminating, a shelter for whoever seeks healing,







- A source of knowledge for whoever has sense,
- And the best narrative for its transmitters,
- And a means for the one who sits in judgment."

Subhaanallah! This brilliant oration reviews many important points which call for careful reflection. For instance, by saying that the Qur'an is 'a lamp whose flame shall not die,' Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) means, as he does in many other statements in this oration, that the Qur'an is a book whose signification shall not be exhausted. It will remain fresh and new until the Day of Resurrection. A verse may have been sent down regarding a specific occasion or community, yet its relevance is not limited to that occasion, person, or community; rather, its signification and applicability are general.




Regarding the verse "For every people there is a guide."(13:7) al-'Ayyashi reports the following discussion with Abu Ja'far (Imam al-Baqir (peace be upon him)):

"The Imam said, '`Ali is the guide, and the guide is always one of us.'

I said, 'Then you - for whom may my life be a sacrifice - are now the guide.'

'You are right,' said the Imam (peace be upon him). 'The Qur'an lives and will not die; the verses live and will not die. If a verse were to die with the death of the persons concerning whom it came down, then the Qur'an would have definitely died. Rather, such a verse would continue to apply to those who are alive as it did to those who died.'"

Another tradition reports that Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said,

*"Certainly, the Qur'an lives, and has not died; and it is*

*existent just as the day and the night and the sun and the moon are existent. And it will exist for the last among us as it has existed for the first."*

## Quran's Power of Attraction

Another aspect of the Qur'an which serves to indicate its unique and exceptional nature is the remarkable and inexhaustible attraction that it exerts.

Today, more than fourteen centuries after the revelation of the Qur'an, the captivating sound of the recitation of the Qur'an can still be heard in all the different parts of the world, leaving its impression on hearts and minds, and transforming the spirits of all who listen to it.

Its appeal overwhelms the soul and brings tears flowing from the eyes and makes the heart tremble.

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ هُمْ بِهٖ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ۔ وَ اِذَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِهٖٓ اِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ مُسْلِمِيْنَ۔

*"Those to whom We gave the Book before this, believe in it, and, when it is recited to them, they say, 'We believe in it; surely it is the Truth from our Lord; even before it we were of those who surrender".*

(28:52-53)

This ayah describes a group of people who undergo a state of veneration and awe when the Qur'an is recited before them. They affirm faith in all the contents of the Book, declare everything in it to be nothing but truth and their veneration of it continues to increase.

Then in another verse, a group of Christians who











believed and became Muslims on hearing the Qur'an are described in these words:

"And when they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflow with tears, because of the truth they recognize. They say,

رَبَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ۔

*"Our Lord we believe; so do You write us down among the witnesses."*

(5:83)

In another place, while describing the believers, the Qur'an says:

اَللّٰهُ نَزَّلَ اَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيْثِ كِتٰبًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ، تَقْشَعِرُّ مِنْهُ جُلُوْدُ الَّذِيْنَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ، ثُمَّ تَلِيْنُ جُلُوْدُهُمْ وَ قُلُوْبُهُمْ اِلٰى ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ، ذٰلِكَ هُدَى اللّٰهِ يَهْدِيْ بِهٖ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ، وَ مَنْ يُّضْلِلِ اللّٰهُ فَمَا لَهٗ مِنْ هَادٍ

*"Allah has sent down the fairest discourse as a book, similar (consistent in parts) yet repeating (its teaching in various aspects); whereat shiver the skins of those who fear their Lord; then their skins and their hearts soften to the remembrance of Allah, this is the guidance of Allah, He guides with it whom He wants, and whoever Allah leaves to stray, will have none to guide ...".*

(39:23)

The rays of attraction exerted by the Qur'an was not confined to Mecca, its birth place, but spread outwards from Mecca together with the movement of the Muslims. To mention some examples: the rays of Qur'an shone in the

heart of King Najjashi, in the Christian court of Ethiopia, thanks to the recitation of Ja'far bin Abitalib, despite the unfavorable situation prevailing there and the pressure brought to bear by the opponents of Islam.

Equally they shone in Madina, the base for the formation of a new Society, where the Qur'an was recited by Mus'ab bin Umayr.




Ibn Hisham writes in his life of the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny):

> *"So strong was the heartfelt desire of the people to hear the Qur'an that even some of the unbelievers of the Quraysh would secretly go near the Prophet's house at night, remaining there until dawn, in order to listen throughout the night to the pleasing melody of the Qur'an as recited by the Messenger of Allah. This happened many times".*

(Sirat Ibn Hisham, Vol. I, p. 386)




So that the people would not fall under the influence of Quran's eloquence and power to attract, the nonbelievers would instruct a group of people to go and make a noise, to whistle and clap their hands, while the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) was reciting the verses of Qur'an.

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَا تَسْمَعُوا لِهَٰذَا الْقُرْآنِ وَالْغَوْا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَغْلِبُونَ۔

> *"The polytheists said: Do not listen to the verses of the Qur'an, and make a noise while they are being recited, perhaps you will thus triumph".*

(41:26)



# Qur'an as a Miracle

To every Prophet, Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) gave some miracles, but gone are the Prophets and their miracles. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) is the last prophet and Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) gave him a timeless miracle, and that miracle is the Holy Qur'an.

It has often been argued that the Qur'an is not only the first book, and the highest linguistic achievement, of the Arabic language, but that it is also Prophet Muhammad's (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) strongest argument against those who doubted his Message. The question that needs to be addressed here concerns the reason why a holy book, a composition of language, should be hailed as Islam's (and Prophet Muhammad's (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny)) strongest miracle and argument. The point has sometimes been made that other prophets had more tangible miracles. In the case of Muhammad, (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) however, the miracle was not comparable to Prophet Mussa's staff or Prophet Issa's healing powers, but was more than that.




The Holy Qur'an is indeed a miracle in many aspects, some of which are described here below:

A) The Exclusive eloquence of the Qur'an.
B) The Inimitable Quality of the Qur'an.
C) The Scientific Miracle of the Qur'an.
D) The Accuracy of the Historical Records in the Qur'an.
E) The Predictions in the Qur'an.
F) The Challenge of the Qur'an.

Since the above points also constitute evidences on the

authenticity of the Qur'an as the word of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He), they are discussed in detail in the Qur'an Resource Paper no. 2, under the title of "Authenticity of the Holy Qur'an".

## The Illustrative Themes of the Qur'an

Another aspect of the novelty of the Qur'an language has to do with its themes. These themes and topics represent a clear departure from those which had been hitherto familiar to the Arabs. As Taha Husayn explained:

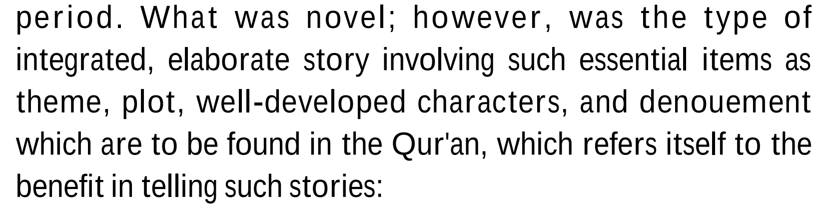
*"It does not deal with any such things as ruins, camels, or long journeys in the desert; nor does it describe longing for the beloved, love, or eulogy, topics most familiar to pre-Islamic Arabs. But rather it talks to the Arabs about such things as the oneness of Allah, His limitless power, His knowledge, which is unattainable, His will, which is unstoppable, and His creation of heaven and earth".*




This passage underscores yet another innovative aspect of the Qur'an, namely the presentation of novel themes through an abundance of examples all aimed at illustration and persuasion. The use of illustration is one of the most effective stylistic techniques of the Qur'an. One can hardly read a verse without experiencing the impact of this technique.

The art of narrative style represents another innovative aspect of the Qur'an. It relates in astounding detail the stories of Prophet Nuh, Ibrahim, Yusuf, Musa, and Issa, among others. It presents the dialogues that took place in such stories and the claims and counter-claims made by each of the opposing parties. Story-telling may not have been totally novel in pre-Islamic Arabia given the significant quantity of parables, epics, and myths that were inherited from that period. What was novel; however, was the type of integrated, elaborate story involving such essential items as theme, plot, well-developed characters, and denouement which are to be found in the Qur'an, which refers itself to the benefit in telling such stories:




نَحْنُ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ اَحْسَنَ الْقَصَصِ بِمَآ اَوْحَيْنَآ اِلَيْكَ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ، وَ اِنْ كُنْتَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ لَمِنَ الْغٰفِلِيْنَ۔

*"We do relate unto you the most beautiful stories, in that We reveal unto you this [portion of the] Qur'an. Before this you too were among those who knew it not".*

(12:3)

## The Central Theme of the Holy Qur'an



### What is the central theme of Qur'an?

Since the advent of Islam and the revelation of the Qur'an in the early years of the seventh century AD, the Muslim Holy Book has been the subject of many extensive analytical studies. The focus of the great majority of these studies has been the theological and legislative aspects of the Holy Book, for the Qur'an provides Muslims with detailed guidance on their everyday problems. Together with the sayings, actions, and recommendations of Muhammad, (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) the Qur'an has been the ultimate source of legal authority for Muslims over the past fourteen centuries.



Muslim scholars have also painstakingly examined, analyzed and interpreted the various verses of the Holy Book, detailing the requirements the Qur'an imposes on

Muslims in order for them to achieve spiritual purity. Thus, in addition to its legislative and theological value, the Qur'an has also served as a source of spiritual guidance for the followers of Islam.

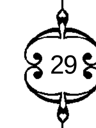
## Holy Qur'an is a complete code of life

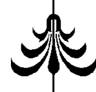
However, we can not claim that the Central Theme of the Holy Qur'an is only legislation and spirituality; as human life is more complex and multi-dimensional. Since Islam is a complete way of human life and Qur'an being its source of guidance, to ascribe the Qur'an to be just the book of legislation and spirituality only will be misleading, because the Qur'an has dealt with a vast range of subjects.

Contrary to the opinion of some people who consider the Holy Qur'an to be of spiritual benefit only, or to be confined to worship, prayers and morals, we should point out that only one-twelfth (500 verses) relates to problems of Jurisprudence; while the larger part of it deals with matters pertaining to various issues including social, political, administrative, historical, cultural, faith and other related matters.

Among the recurring themes of the Qur'an is about the universe itself and its Creator. Another theme treated by the Qur'an is the purpose of the universe and its creation. Among the other general issues dealt by the Qur'an is the question about human being: Is man a despicable creature, or a personality with nobility and dignity etc.?

The other subject dealt with in the Qur'an is the issue of human society: Is the society considered to be primary and the individual as secondary, or whether it subordinates the society to the individual? Are societies, according to the Qur'an, subject to laws governing their life and death, their






rise and decline, or are these conditions applicable to individuals alone?

The Qur'an deals with numerous other issues. One of them is the point of view of the Qur'an about itself. The other issue is related to the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and its manner of introducing and addressing him. Another issue is its definition of a believer (mu'min) and his characteristics and so on.

Furthermore, each of these general issues possesses various branches and divisions. For example, when discussing mankind and its situation, it is natural to speak about morality. Or, when speaking about society, the problem of human relationships also unavoidably enters the discussion. The same is true of such notions as "enjoining good and forbidding evil," and the problem of social classes.

Now the question is: What is then the Quran's general theme? If pondered upon the multifaceted contents inside the Qur'an, one can safely reach to the conclusion that the central theme and aim pursued by the Qur'an is the 'training of the human being' as a being conscious of his duties. The main aim of the Qur'an is therefore to reinforce and accelerate the spiritual ascension, together with all the qualities of human being, toward a state of true loftiness and the dignity of which the human being is worthy.

In another words, we can say that the main purpose of Qur'an is to expound truths that are relevant to the 'life of the human being' and the exaltation of his being and conducive to his attaining a life of true happiness.

Imam Amirul Mu'miniin `Ali bin Abitalib (peace be upon him) narrated the following dua, from which we can derive very clearly that the Holy Qur'an is the 'chart of life for man'. He prayed: "O Allah! expand my breast with Qur'an, actuate

my body with Qur'an, enlighten my sight with Qur'an, liberate my tongue by Qur'an, and help me to mould my life according to Qur'an, so long as You make me live".

## Method used by the Qur'an in Training Human being



As said earlier, the aim pursued by the Qur'an is the training of the human being as a being conscious of his duties. Now, the emergence of such a being requires a comprehensive reform of the human being, involving various changes such as the negation of false values and meaningless criteria, and fostering of a creative energetic spirit within him. The Qur'an can thus be said to melt the spirit of human beings and pour them into a new mould, where they acquire a different, richer and more valuable form.





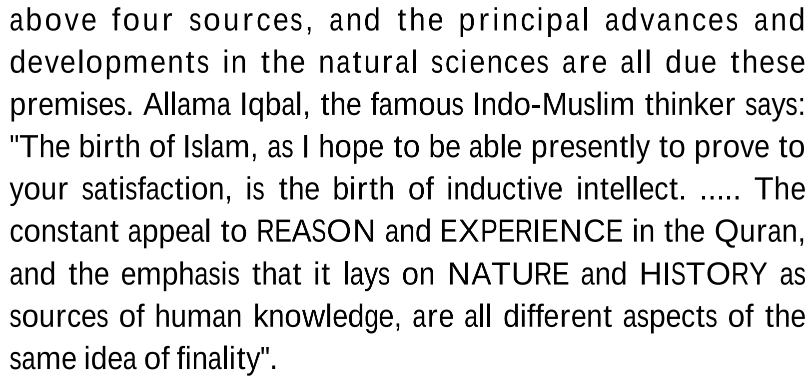
Although this may be said to be the principal aim of the Qur'an, it summons the human being insistently, at the very same time, to reflect and to ponder, and to acquire a realistic view of the world; it guides him on to the path of thought, of teaching and learning.

The method used by the Qur'an in training human being is that of 'Inductive Method', i.e. the process of deriving general principles of life by using logic, reason and facts. According to Qur'an, there are four sources of human knowledge through which eternal truth can be derived, and they are:



1) Reason and logic.
2) Experience.
3) Study of Nature.
4) History.

All the other forms of sciences are offshoots of the



above four sources, and the principal advances and developments in the natural sciences are all due these premises. Allama Iqbal, the famous Indo-Muslim thinker says: "The birth of Islam, as I hope to be able presently to prove to your satisfaction, is the birth of inductive intellect. ..... The constant appeal to REASON and EXPERIENCE in the Quran, and the emphasis that it lays on NATURE and HISTORY as sources of human knowledge, are all different aspects of the same idea of finality".

Of course, there are traditions narrated from the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and the Imams of Ahlul-bayt (peace be upon them) saying for example:

*"Verily the Qur'an has an exterior and an interior, and its interior has an interior up to seven (or according to a version, seventy) interiors . . . "*





And the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) and the Imams (peace be upon them) gave importance to its exterior as much as to its interior; they were as much concerned with its revelation as they were with its interpretation. That is why the Qur'an deserves to be evaluated from different points of view.

Some of the topics which call for examination in the Qur'an are:

1) The artistic and verbal beauty of the Qur'an and its style which is neither poetry nor prose.
2) The intellectual and scientific content of the Qur'an.
3) The reinforcement of the spiritual dimensions of man.
4) The appeal to reflect and ponder.
5) The appeal to the study of nature.
6) The tapping of the historical incidents for evaluation.

7) The expounding of the mysteries of the creation.
8) The mentioning of series of truths and principles that govern the human life, i.e. Sociology, Economics, Government, etc.

## Revolutionary Transformation in the Society through the Qur'an

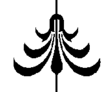
Another aspect of the miraculousness of the Qur'an which has had a great effect is the revolutionary transformation it brought about in human civilization. A matter calling for serious attention in the study of Islam is the fact that it received no assistance from factors external to itself when it began to create the nucleus of a universal society out of a scattered and disunited people that lacked all science and free thought and did not even seek to unify its constituent tribes; and when it began, moreover, to found a uniquely, vast and spiritual civilization.

All the factors for changing the world, for putting forward an international law with the slogan of unity among races, peoples, and social classes, for creating a movement for the liberation of thought and the ennobling of knowledge, were derived from the very text of the Qur'an, from the culture that emerged from the Qur'an and from the Islamic order. Islam never relied on a government or a power situated outside the society it had itself brought into being.

Even the aggressors, for example the Mongols, who attacked the Islamic lands and triumphed over the Muslims, thanks to their military superiority, lost their dominance in the end when they were confronted with the spiritual power of










Islam, and they adopted the religion of the people they had conquered. This history of nations does not record any other example of a victorious aggressor adopting the religion of the people it had defeated.

## Holy Qur'an can shape the destiny of the human race as a whole

Therefore, Qur'an is specially essential for those scholars who are interested in the study of man and society, since this book has been effectively instrumental not only in moulding the destinies of Islamic societies, but also in shaping the destiny of the human race as a whole.

A brief glance over history would be enough to provide sufficient proof of the claim that there has been no such book that has ever influenced human societies to the magnitude of the Qur'an. It is for the same reason that the Qur'an automatically steps into the precincts of sociological discussions, and becomes the elemental constituent of the subjects of research in this discipline. This means that any deep study and profound research in the field of world history of the last fourteen hundred years, is impossible without the knowledge of the Qur'an.

Smith writes in his - Muhammad and Islam:

*"The teachings of the Qur'an, which mentions knowledge and the pen in its opening verses, brought about a tremendous transformation. Islam proclaimed study to be a religious duty, and made the blank ink of the scribe and the scholar to be superior to the red blood of the martyr.*

*"Thanks to the teachings of the Qur'an and its emphasis on the cultivation of knowledge, countless scholars made their appearance and wrote innumerable books. Different*

*scientific disciplines were derived from the Qur'an and spread across the world by Muslim thinkers. The world was illumined with the light of the Qur'an and culture of Islam".*

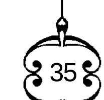
## The Essentiality of the Study of the Qur'an

The study and knowledge of the Qur'an is essential not only for Scholars and Philosophers, but for everyone: an ordinary person, a student, a worker, a trader, a learned person as well as for all faithful believers.

The study of the Qur'an is essential for every committed Muslim, since it is the main source and foundation of the religious thought and faith. Whatsoever gives meaning, essence and sanctity to his existence lies in the Holy Qur'an.

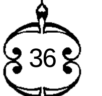
The Qur'an is not just like other religious books which are content to discuss the problems of existence of Allah (Glorified and Exalted is He) and creation in cryptic tones, or like those which merely convey a series of simple moral advice and counsels, so that those who believe in them are hopelessly left to search for guidance in other sources. It is a book where all essential ingredients of life can be found.

Unlike other books, the Qur'an discusses and formulates all the ideas and views that are essential for a man's life, besides communicating the tenets of faith. Since the Qur'an is book of life, it also lays down all the principles of life including that of moral and ethical values for the purpose of individual, social and familial existence. Unfortunately, the study of Qur'an has been left for Scholars and learned people only.







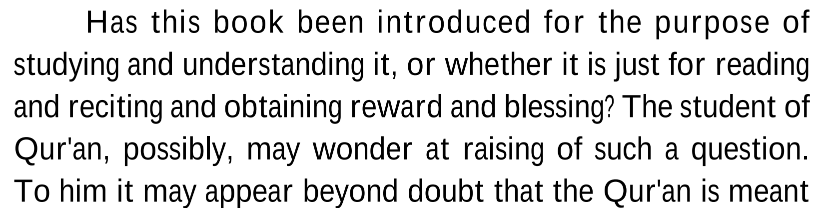






## Is Qur'an Understandable?

But the important question which is often asked is whether the Qur'an is understandable by an ordinary reader, or it requires scholarly background to comprehend its meaning?



Has this book been introduced for the purpose of studying and understanding it, or whether it is just for reading and reciting and obtaining reward and blessing? The student of Qur'an, possibly, may wonder at raising of such a question. To him it may appear beyond doubt that the Qur'an is meant for the purpose of knowing and understanding it.

Nevertheless, in view of various undesirable currents, which due to numerous reasons came into existence in the Muslim world regarding the question of understanding of the Qur'an, and which had an important role in bringing about the decline of Muslims, I shall discuss the necessity of studying and understanding the Qur'an in brief.

### Is the purpose of Qur'an to obtain thawab only?

There are some people who think that the Qur'an is to be read merely for the purpose of obtaining spiritual reward (thawab) without need of understanding anything of its contents. They continuously recite the Qur'an, but if they are even once asked: "Do you understand the meaning of what you are reading?" they cannot answer. To recite the Qur'an is essential and good, being regarded as the first step necessary for comprehending its contents; and not merely as a means for gaining Divine reward.

Regrettably, the roots of those degenerate and dangerous notions still persist in our societies. So I consider it necessary to elaborate on this topic.

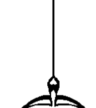
Qur'an must be read and studied with the intention of educating oneself. The Qur'an itself clarifies this point:

كِتٰبٌ اَنْزَلْنٰهُ اِلَيْكَ مُبٰرَكٌ لِّيَدَّبَّرُوْٓا اٰيٰتِهٖ وَ لِيَتَذَكَّرَ اُولُوا الْاَلْبَابِ۔

*"A book We have sent down to you, blessed, that men possessed of mind may ponder its signs end so remember".*

(38:29)

One of the functions of the Qur'an is to instruct and to teach. For this purpose, the Qur'an addresses human reason and speaks in logical and demonstrative terms.





Infact, not only the believers and the faithful, but even the infidels are invited by it to contemplate over its verses. The Qur'an demands that it verses should be first contemplated over, before forming any adverse opinion against them. Addressing the opponents, it says, why they don't ponder over the Qur'an, what sort of hearts they possess, they are as if shut close and sealed:

اَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُوْنَ الْقُرْاٰنَ اَمْ عَلٰى قُلُوْبٍ اَقْفَالُهَا۔

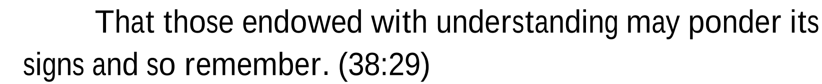
*"What, do they not ponder the Qur'an? Or is it that there are locks upon their hearts?"*

(47:24)

The Qur'an also says in one of its verses:

*"(This is) a Book We have revealed to you abounding in good, that they may ponder upon the verses".*

That is, We have not sent the Qur'an to be kissed, embraced and put on the niche to gather dust, but for men to read and to contemplate about its contents:



That those endowed with understanding may ponder its signs and so remember. (38:29)

Ayatullah Murtadha Mutahhari says: "Scores of verses in Qur'an emphasize the importance of contemplation in the Qur'an and interpretation of the Qur'anic verses, although not an interpretation based on personal caprices and bias, but a just, truthful and balanced interpretation free of all traces of selfish interests.





"If we try to comprehend the Qur'an in an honest and unbiased way, it is not at all necessary to solve all problems that we find in it. In this regard the Qur'an is similar to Nature. In Nature, too, a number of mysteries have neither been solved yet, nor can they be solved in present conditions, yet are likely to be solved in the future. Moreover, in studying and understanding nature, man has to tailor his ideas in accordance with Nature itself. He is forced to interpret Nature in accordance with its reality. He cannot define Nature in terms of his own caprices and inclinations.

"The Qur'an, like the book of Nature, is a book that has not been sent for a specific age and time. Had it been otherwise, all the secrets of the Qur'an would have been discovered in the past; this heavenly Book would not have presented its charm, freshness and vitality. But we see that the possibility of contemplation, reflection and discovery of new dimensions is inexhaustible in the case of this Holy Book".



This is a point that has amply been emphasized and clarified by the Prophet and the Imams. In a tradition, it is related from the Prophet (blessings of Allah be upon him and his progeny) that the Qur'an, like the sun and the moon, will present its movement and continuity; that is, the Qur'an is not static or monotonous.

In 'Uyun akhbar al-Rida, from Imam Ridha (peace be upon him), it is quoted that Imam Ja'far Sadiq (peace be upon him) was asked about the secret of it that as the time passes and the more it is read and recited, the Qur'an increases in its novelty and freshness day by day. The Imam Sadiq (peace be upon him) answered: "Because the Qur'an is not for an exclusive age or for an exclusive people".

## The Qur'an is for all - the learned as well as the ordinary person

The Qur'an has been sent for all ages and for all human beings. It is so composed that inspite of changes in knowledge, outlook and approach through various times and ages, it surpasses all learning and knowledge in all ages. While it encompasses mysteries and abstruse intricacies for the reader of every age, at the same time it presents a great feast of meanings and ideas that can satiate the needs of every one and every time in accordance with the capacity of that particular age".

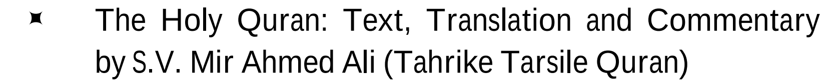
Thus the Qur'an is for all: the learned as well as the ordinary reader. To make this concept clear, we can compare the Qur'an to an ocean. The less earned, like children, collect pebbles and shells from its shores. The Scholars and thinkers, like pearl divers, bring out from it the highest philosophy, wisdom and rules of perfect way of living.








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